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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ADDIS ABABA 002526

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AF FOR A/S FRAZER

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SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA: DEPUTY MINISTER TEKEDA TALKS SOMALIA,
REGIONAL ISSUES WITH DAS YAMAMOTO

Classified By: Charge Janet Wilgus for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Deputy Foreign Minister Tekeda Alemu told AF DAS Yamamoto Sept. 16 that although the GOE does not see increased risk of conflict with Eritrea, it nevertheless would prefer a six-month extension of UNMEE. In Somalia, the GOE now hopes only to contain the Council of Islamic Courts (CIC) in Southern Somalia through an alliance with Somaliland and Puntland, bolstered by the deployment of Ugandan forces in IGASOM. Tekeda said that the GOE's major concern was that tensions between Somaliland and Puntland could weaken the alliance. The Deputy Minister remarked that the Puntland government was strong because of its firm base of clan loyalty. The Somali TFG, while more representative of Somalia as a whole, was weakened precisely by its multi-clan formula. Nonetheless, the GOE still regarded the Somalia's transitional federal institutions and charter as the only basis from which the international community could work. PM Meles has provided assurances to Ugandan President Museveni that Ethiopian troops would provide support to Uganda IGASOM troops in case of emergency. Tekeda expressed concern about increasing Eritrean influence over Djibouti as well as CIC contacts with President Guelleh. He encouraged the USG to speak frankly with Djibouti about the risks of its behavior, and thanked Yamamoto for the USG's assistance in bolstering Kenyan resolve in dealing with Somalia. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) AF DAS Don Yamamoto met with Deputy Foreign Minister Tekeda Alemu Sept. 16. Charge Wilgus and Pol/Econ Counselor joined Yamamoto, while Tekeda was accompanied by Director General for Europe and the Americas Almaz Amaha and Deputy Alayew Mamo.

UNMEE RENEWAL: GOE PREFERS SIX-MONTH ROLLOVER

¶3. (C) DAS Yamamoto asked what the GOE hoped to see happen to the mandate of the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) at the late September UN Security Council meeting on this subject. Tekeda replied that although "it doesn't matter much," the GOE would prefer to see a six-month rollover of the mission in its current form. He denied that possible armed conflict with the Council of Islamic Courts in Somalia heightened the risk of an outbreak of hostilities with Eritrea, arguing that the current balance of forces along the Ethio-Eritrean border would continue to deter any attack by Asmara.

¶4. (C) Tekeda also confirmed that the GOE would be represented at the Sept. 18 UNSC session on Darfur by MFA

Director for African Affairs Amb. Sahliework. He noted that he, PM Meles and Foreign Minister Seyoum would all be tied up in annual party meetings during that period. Tekeda, who is not officially a member of the ruling party, noted that he had been invited for the first time to the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM) meeting. (NOTE: Meles and Seyoum will be attending the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPFL) meeting at the same time. END NOTE.) The Deputy Minister added that if Minister Seyoum travels to the UNGA at all this year, it will be in late September.

GOE SEEKING TO CONTAIN CIC

15. (C) Tekeda implied that thanks to U.S. support for the warlord alliance against terrorism in Mogadishu, the CIC was ensconced as "part of the landscape" in Somalia. The most the GOE could now hope for, he said, was to contain the CIC, taking advantage of the CIC's narrow base in the Hawiye clan.

He claimed that most ordinary Somalis had evolved in their attitudes and no longer felt enmity towards Ethiopia. He pointed to relatively low turnout at CIC-organized rallies against Ethiopian intervention in Somalia, as well as the lack of problems encountered by Ethiopian troops who were now conducting training of TFG and Puntland militia. Tekeda said that the GOE could live with an "Islamic Republic of Somalia" so long as it did not have broader regional ambitions. The GOE's main objective was to sideline extremists in the CIC like Sheik Hassan Dahir Aweys.

REGIONAL DYNAMICS ON IGASOM

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16. (C) The Deputy Foreign Minister argued that deployment of IGASOM in Somalia would show moderate forces within the CIC that there was "another show in town" apart from extremists. He claimed that Kenyan Foreign Minister Tuju had told the GOE in Nairobi that during Tuju's separate meeting with Sheik Sharif Ahmed, the latter eventually admitted that IGASOM deployment would be valuable, but had no mandate to agree with Kenya on this issue. Tekeda urged that the USG hold his information extremely closely. Tekeda said the GOE understood that there was no purely military solution to Somalia, but argued that it was necessary to display strength and credibility to bolster the position of moderates and counter the intimidation of extremist elements.

17. (C) Tekeda maintained that Ugandan troops operating under an IGASOM mandate would be able to manage the difficult situation in Somalia -- with strong backing from Ethiopia. Tekeda revealed that both he and PM Meles had provided assurances to the Ugandan government during separate trips to Kampala that Ethiopian troops would provide any support necessary to Ugandan troops under pressure from CIC forces. Ethiopian troops would be at the ready on the Ethiopian side of the border to respond to any emergency. The recent flare-up in tensions between Somaliland and Puntland constituted the "weakest flank" of the alliance that the GOE was constructing to counter the CIC, Tekeda said.

18. (C) Tekeda thanked DAS Yamamoto for the USG's role in firming up Kenya's resolve to counter the CIC threat in Somalia. Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia were now unified in their commitment to support the TFG, he said. He indicated that the government of Sudan probably did not truly support IGASOM deployment, but did not dare go against the common position of IGAD, which also had support from the international community. DAS Yamamoto suggested to Tekeda that Arab League support for the deployment would be very helpful. Tekeda replied that Foreign Minister Seyoum could use his good relationship with Egypt to push for at least Egyptian acquiescence, if not outright support, for IGASOM.

DJIBOUTI: INTIMIDATED BY ISAIAS, COURTED BY COURTS

¶9. (C) The Government of Djibouti's opposition to IGAD actions in Somalia are the result of its fear of Eritrean President Isaias, Tekeda said, as well as President Guelleh's personal business interests with Eritrea. The Deputy Foreign Minister speculated that the Djiboutian leadership was worried that Eritrea would support Afari separatist movements, as Isaias had done successfully in Sudan, if Djibouti did not follow Eritrea's lead in Somalia. Tekeda also told Yamamoto that Aweys and other CIC leaders had stopped in Djibouti to meet with President Guelleh on their way back from Libya the week before. Tekeda maintained that the GOD was "on the wrong path," and added that Djibouti was not strong enough to take Ethiopia's continued friendship and forbearance for granted. He criticized President Guelleh's recent visit to Tehran as well as his comments on a recent BBC Somali Service broadcast, in which he had called on Somalis to be vigilant in defense of their homeland against the Ethiopian threat.

TEKEDA: MORE USG ENGAGEMENT NEEDED

¶10. (C) Tekeda urged that the USG speak frankly with Djibouti about its role in the region. He said that President Guelleh would pay attention to U.S. concerns given the importance to him of the U.S. military base in Djibouti. "He must be told to choose" whose side he wanted to take. Tekeda also encouraged DAS Yamamoto to increase engagement with Somaliland leaders. He suggested that the GOE, USG and UK consult on how to reduce tensions and increase cooperation among the governments of Somaliland, Puntland and the TFG.

¶11. (C) Speaking broadly, Tekeda told Yamamoto that due to developments in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere, "there is a perception (in the region) that the extremists are winning, and that the Western World is facing a setback. This

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perception is emboldening extremists everywhere, including President Isaias and the CIC." Tekeda argued that strong action was need to brake this momentum and convince moderate forces that they will receive international support against extremists.

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